

“It is finished”
Sermon on Good Friday 2010
John 19:30

It is finished.

We’ve just heard this shortest of all sentences as part of the long Good Friday readings. It is so short...we may almost overlook it.

It is finished.

...spoken by Jesus just before he dies.

At this moment, just before his death, Jesus knows that his work and his life are complete. He has fulfilled what he’d been sent to do.

Jesus was clear about his mission.

“I have come that they may have life,” he said, “and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Everything he did – teaching, preaching, provoking, consoling, healing – came from that single purpose, that deep commitment.

His eyes were fixed on the reign of God, nothing could stop him: not opinions of other people, not praise, not blame, not the cross, not death.

Jesus had found his true purpose in life. He had discovered his heart’s desire, something big enough to live for, and big enough to die for.

Yes, he was sometimes afraid.

Yes, the cost was total.

But he had discovered his own deepest desiring, the passion for God that made him willing to do anything, even to die, in order to express the longing of his heart.

In times like ours the thought of living so passionately for God may sound horrifying. Who lives passionately for God?

Religious fanatics? Fundamentalists? Terrorists who kill in the name of a God who would never want that?

No.

This is not the passion I mean.

Nor is it the passion Jesus lived.

Passion for God does not include violence, bloodshed, & terror.

What does it mean to live passionately for God?

Who is our God? What is our understanding of who God is? And what sorts of things do we think, please God?

Jesus calls us not only to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, but also to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31).

This summons leads us beyond hate, fear, or self-righteousness...

It calls us to a passionate love for all in the name of a passionately loving God!

Jesus lived passionately for God. He gave up his self-will, his independence, his autonomy and listened deeply to what the spirit of God moved him to do. And then he did it.

Jesus didn’t live by a fixed set of rules, beliefs and habits.

Instead he lived spontaneously, often outside of conventional norms, by the spirit of love, rather than the judgemental letter of the law.

Jesus crossed boundaries and reached out to the rejected and forgotten.

He blessed and socialized with people living at the margins. He offered freedom. A freedom that was and is larger & more creative than many then and now can imagine.

We Christians are invited to – like Jesus – give ourselves to God completely. Even when we are aware of life's inevitable ironies, its paradoxes, and its contradictions, we yearn for something that transcends them.

I so long to find something to which I can wholeheartedly belong, to which I can give myself completely, to live in the realm of a love that will never let me go...

Don't you, too?

How much sense have you got of your lives purpose? Are you sure that you truly matter to God? Do you feel your life is expressing your deepest values and commitments? Are you at peace and in balance with yourself and your God? Are you satisfied and content with your life as an expression of your faith? Are you feeling fulfilled?

Or are you struggling with boredom, senselessness, distraction and irritation? Are you feeling that the great adventure of life has somehow passed you by?

Jesus was faced with the question: What have I been sent here to do? And we are faced with it, too.

Dare we look at it openly? Truly?

What have I been sent to this world to do?

What is the dream that wants to be realized through my life? What makes my heart sing? What is it deep within, that I truly want my life to express?

How can I bear witness to what I value most?

Where do I find my deepest joy?

The first answers that came to my mind are of course or embarrassingly coming from our consumer culture: people long for fame, money, power, glory... grab everything you can. Prove your worth. Get to the top. Make your mark. Be a success. See your name in lights.

That's how the world works. And many of us may have already realized how little peace and satisfaction comes out of that.

The greatest portfolio, the sleekest body, the widest name recognition, or the most fashionable address, or the most impressive resume – these signs of success in a consumer culture do not satisfy the hungry heart and soul.

The path of Christ, esp. the Christ on the cross, invites us into a larger, riskier and more glorious project than self promotion and image-management can.

Christ calls us to be transformed! ...to live not for ourselves alone, but for him, for one another, for this earth, for all God's creation.

Finding a true vocation is de-centering the ego. It is the discovery of a deeper wanting than what a selfish autonomous ego may want. It is the discovery of a desire that lies in the joy to serve.

“The place where God calls you to, is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” (F. Buechner)

When we find this, that meeting place between our joy and the world’s hunger, we make the purpose-giving discovery: this is what I was made for. This is what my life is about.

And: in a sense – it is not about me at all...

It is about God, and what pleases him.

How often can we say that the things we do are pointing towards a God finding deep pleasure in them?

Where in our lives, do we feel God’s pleasure?

In what situations do we feel most fully alive? Most authentic? Most at peace and in balance?

What is the place of your deepest joy?

Take a moment to think...

And believe it or not: your answer is a clue to your vocation, it shows you the way in which God is inviting you to participate to work in his world...

...to contribute to restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

It was joy that pulled Jesus forward.

It was joy that led him to love and heal and confront and provoke. It was joy that made him see the cost and pay the price.

It was joy that let him serve God and his creation.

The joy of life. A life lived in accordance with the giver of life.

It was the joy of a fulfilled life that even on the cross shines through and lets a person dying in agony say: It is finished.

Full stop.

Unless we know what we have come here to do, why we have been placed on this earth, we won’t be able to say at the end of our lives “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7).

In Good Friday and in Jesus’ words “It is finished”, I hear the challenge to each of us to ask the Holy Spirit to show us what we most deeply desire and what we have been sent in the world to do. And then try to do it.

And: face the challenge to accept the limits of what we can accomplish.

We all have a part to play in the drama of salvation. But it is not us who complete it. It is God in Christ, through the power of the Spirit.

That is a truth that is often hard to accept, but we must understand that we cannot do the work alone.

We need to do it together... relying on the grace and power of God... and sometimes even rest at the foot of the cross and in the power of the cross.

I need to admit that I myself cannot save the world, only Jesus can.

He can. He does. And he has.

When I listen to Jesus words "It is finished", I have a chance to relax and let go of the anxious rush to make a difference... to do it all, do it now, do it myself, do it perfectly...

I can breathe in the power of the cross.

I can breathe in the love that could not be killed on the cross.

I can get strength from this cross – for the journey ahead.

Let Good Friday be a chance for us to breathe in, relax, let go and love.

...and most of all: to reflect on what we were sent in this world to do?

What were we sent to give?

What were we sent to receive?

What were we sent to learn?

What needs to happen so that, with Jesus, we too could say "It is finished"?

On Good Friday the promise of Easter begins to dawn.

Rest now,

Holy Jesus. Hero of the cross.

Your work is done.

The world has done its sinning,

And you have done your loving,

each beyond limit.

And at the end, limitless love prevails.

Your dying becomes my hope

And the hope for the world.

Amen.